

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000061

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/10/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT MINISTER SHARES (BIZARRE) VIEWS

REF: 03 QUITO 3027

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney. Reason 1.4 (b&d).

1. (C) Summary: In a December 7 tour d'horizon with the Ambassador and DCM, Government Minister Jaime Damerval expressed willingness to cooperate to combat trafficking in persons. He also shed (sometimes disturbing) light on his thinking on a range of other issues, including the drug war, the government's referendum proposal, USG support for democracy, and security burdens caused by Colombia spill-over. Given his views, we consider it fortunate that Damerval is apparently not a member of the President's inner circle. End Summary.

2. (C) The Ambassador invited Damerval to breakfast at the residence to lobby for the minister's personal involvement on the TIP issue, which he accepted eagerly (SepTel). He dominated the conversation in a stream-of-consciousness flow which, while respectful, included several statements of concern.

Neighbors No Help, U.S. to Blame

3. (C) In a reference to his ongoing dispute with Guayaquil leaders about security there, Damerval complained that his police and prison resources are stretched thin because of the need to bolster security along northern border provinces. Finance minister Yopez is no help, he said, strictly holding the line on budget increases. He hoped for help from the Spanish government on prisons. Colombia, never a good neighbor to Ecuador, had showed no willingness to acknowledge responsibility for some of Ecuador's security-related expenses.

4. (C) The narcotics trafficking which undermines Ecuadorian security, he said, stems from the personal weakness of U.S. drug users. Continuing on Guayaquil, his native city, the minister said it had been difficult to craft the referendum to be proposed by the President by January 21, and that one key element would be increased autonomy for the city, and possibly other areas.

5. (C) Damerval then laid into Ecuador's southern neighbor, citing the US for guaranteeing a peace which cheated Ecuador on its eastern frontier. The US should encourage Peru to reopen the 1996 peace treaty, and move the riverine border east.

Congress Not Worth It?

6. (C) Discussing TIP, Damerval acknowledged the difficulty of dealing with Congress, but cited his personal friendship with the newly-elected Congress President as a potential asset. Acknowledging his reputation as a political provocateur, he slyly noted USG support for President Fujimori even after he dissolved the Peruvian Congress. The Ambassador noted that USG support is for Ecuador's democratic institutions, including Congress, and that the USG is seeking ways to strengthen them.

Comment

7. (C) Damerval, appointed in November to lead the Gutierrez government's defense against impeachment, appeared uncomfortable but eager to please, highlighting his language ability, support for a free trade agreement, and his personal affinity for the U.S., and agreeing wholeheartedly with the Ambassador's request that he show greater leadership on TIP. His comments revealed a darker side, however, and a tendency common to intellectuals of his generation to implicitly blame the U.S. for Ecuador's problems, hold irrational fears of Peru, and seek US intervention to solve Ecuador's problems. Given these views, we believe it is fortunate for Ecuador that Damerval is clearly not trusted by Gutierrez to chart GOE policy, and hope rumors of his impending dismissal prove correct.

KENNEY